<u>WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:</u>

1.   A computer-implemented method of managing documents related to a patent application, said method comprising:

storing a plurality electronic documents related to a patent application in a database accessible to a server system, wherein each of said plurality of electronic documents has a document type and wherein said plurality of stored documents includes at least one document having a first document type and at least one document having a second document type;

storing a rule in said database that indicates specific document types to be deleted from said database in response to a predetermined event occurring related to prosecution of said patent application, wherein said rule indicates that documents of said second type should be deleted but not documents of said first type;

receiving a signal at said server system indicating said predetermined event has occurred;

after receiving said signal, implementing said rule to delete documents of said second type in said database that are related to said patent application but not delete documents of said first type that are related to said patent application.

2.   The method of claim 1 wherein said predetermined event is either grant of a patent from said patent application or payment of an issue fee for said patent.

3.   The method of claim 1 wherein said predetermined event is a signal received from an authorized client system.

4.   The method of claim 1 wherein said first document type is a filed patent application and wherein said second document type is a draft patent application.

5.   The method of claim 1 wherein said patent application is assigned to a first technology developer and wherein said signal is generated by a client system associated with said first technology developer.

6.   The method of claim 5 wherein said client system is associated with a patent practitioner that represents said first technology developer.

1   7.   The method of claim 1 wherein said executing step is in response

2   to receipt of said signal.

1   8.   The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of electronic

2   documents also includes at least one document having a third document type, said third

3   document type being associated with unofficial notes from an inventor of said patent

4   application to an practitioner, and wherein said rule causes said server to delete

5   documents of said third type associated with said patent application during said

6   executing step.

1   9.   The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of electronic

2   documents also includes at least one document having a fourth document type, said

3   fourth document type being associated with versions of patent papers stored in said

4   database in an image file format that were generated by a patent office, and wherein

5   said rule does not cause said server to delete documents of said fourth type associated

6   with said patent application during said executing step.

1   10.   The method of claim 1 further comprising allowing a client

2   system to create and/or modify said rule that defines specific document types to be

3   deleted and/or specific types of documents to be saved in response to receiving said

4   signal.

1   11.   A computer-implemented method of managing documents

2   related to a patent application, said method comprising:

3   storing a plurality electronic documents related to a patent application in

4   a database accessible to a server system, wherein each of said plurality of electronic

5   documents has one or more attributes associated therewith;

6   storing a rule in said database that determines specific electronic

7   documents to be deleted from said database in response to a predetermined event

8   occurring related to prosecution of said patent application, wherein said rule deletes

9   documents having a predetermined attribute;

10   receiving a signal at said server system indicating said predetermined

11   event has occurred;

12   after receiving said signal, implementing said rule to delete documents

13   from said database that are related to said patent application and have said

14   predetermined attribute but does not delete documents from said database that are

15   related to said patent application and do not have said predetermined attribute.

1   12.   The method of claim 11 wherein said predetermined event is a

2   grant of a patent from said patent application.

1   13.   The method of claim 11 wherein said predetermined event is

2   payment of an issue fee for said patent application.

1   14.   The method of claim 11 wherein said patent application is

2   assigned to a first technology developer and wherein said signal is generated by a client

3   system associated with said first technology developer.

1   15.   The method of claim 11 wherein said executing step is in

2   response to receipt of said signal.

1   16.   A server system for managing information related to patent

2   applications, said server system comprising:

3   (a)   a processor;

4   (b)   a database; and

5   (c)   a memory for storing a program;

6   wherein said processor is operative with said program to:

7   (i)   store, in said database, information related to a patent

8   application, said information including at least an invention disclosure, a patent

9   application as filed in an official patent office, unofficial documents related to said

10   patent application and one or more papers generated by said official patent office that

11   are related to said patent application;

12   (ii)   in response to an indication from said official patent

13   office that said patent application has been allowed, receive an instruction to categorize

14   said patent application as allowed in said database and automatically delete said

15   unofficial documents related to said patent application from said database.

1   17.   The server system of claim 16 wherein said processor is

2   operative with said program to allow a client system to set-up workflow rules related to

3   defining specific types of documents to be deleted and/or specific types of documents

4   to be saved in response to receiving an instruction that a patent application has been

5   allowed.

1   18.   The server system of claim 16 wherein said unofficial documents

2   include one or more of: notes from an inventor of said patent application to an

3   practitioner, draft copies of said patent application and draft copies of Responses to

4   Office Actions.